

[Ed Grantham]

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FORM A Circumstance of Interview

NAME OF WORKER George Hartman ADDRESS 2438 W. Lincoln

DATE Oct. 19, 1938 SUBJECT Folklore, Nebraska

1. Name and address of informant Ed. Grantham, 851 No. 26
2. Date and time of interview. Wed. Oct., 19, 1938 Wed. morning and afternoon.
3. Place of interview. 857 No. 26th
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

My father at 2438 W. My father and Mr. Granthem for 64 years.

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you. None
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. Lives with daughter-in-law has a nice comfortable room c15-2/27/41 Nebraska

FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER George Hartman ADDRESS 2438 W St.

DATE Oct. 19, 1938 SUBJECT Folklore Early Nebraska

NAME OF ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Ed Grantham 851 No. 26.

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1. Ancestry. Scotch and English
2. Place and date of birth. Fairfield County, Ohio Aug. 4, 1856.
3. Family
4. Place lived in, with dates. Ohio 1856-1866—Iowa from 1866 to Apr. 1867. Nebr. 1867 to now.
5. Education, with dates. Home and public schools 2 years of Doane College.
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates. Various, Farmed railroad work building construction.
7. Special skills and interests. Engineer on road.
8. Community and religious activities.
9. Description of informant
10. Other points gained in interview.

2

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER George Hartman ADDRESS 2438 W

DATE Oct, 19, 1938 SUBJECT Folklore Nebr

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Ed. Granthem 851 No. 26

I have been requested by some of my friends to write a short story of the pioneers of Nebraska. To begin with my name is Edward T. Grantham and of Scotch English pioneers

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of the United States. I might say of English colonies of America. My father's family settled in Virginia in the early 1700's. My Scotch ancestors on my maternal side in about 1690 on the east coast of Maryland. Father's family moved in 1846. My grandfather Grantham was born in Va. July 24, 1797. My grandmother Elizabeth Grantham born Febr. 14, 1803. My grandfather Robertson in Nov. 1791. My Grandmother Eleanor F. Robertson, Aug. 14, 1801. Father W.T. Grantham, Born Nov. 8th 1830. My mother Marg, Margaret Grantham, Dec. 24, 1888 born in Virginia.

My father and mother were graduates of Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, Ohio. Met at attendance at that school. Father was a theological student and entered the ministry at Methodist Episcopal Church after graduation. Mother's was a literary course and in after years was contributor to several ladies' magazines during the 1850's and 60's, and up to the time we came to the west in 1866. We left our home Talasha Ohio, Aug. 4, 1866 on my 10th birthday. After paying farewell visits to both my father and mother's kin we entrained for the west at Urbana, Ohio the latter part of August.

3

My father was a veteran of the army of the Union side and was discharged at Fort McHenry, Maryland. During his stay at Fort McHenry the son of John Scott Key, writer of the "Star Spangled Banner" was a political prisoner at Fort McHenry. As you know, the Star Spangled Banner was written on a British Frigate during a bomb-bardment where Key was held a temporary prisoner until after the bombardment was over. My Grandfather served in war of 1812, wounded at battles, and crippled for the rest of his life receiving no pension from Government.

We made several stops one at Indianapolis, Ind. Terre Haitte Indiana and Springfield, Illinois. Father had a cousin at Springfield was a neighbor and friend of Abraham Lincoln. He took us to the Lincoln home and told us many stories of the early life of Lincoln. We boarded the Wabash train for Quincy, Illinois and crossed the Mississippi river at that point. Entrained on Hannibal St. Joe Railroad for St. Joseph, Missouri. There

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we boarded a steamboat named "City of Denver" landed two days later on the east bank of the Missouri river opposite Plattsmouth, Nebraska. The landing place was called "Betheham landing." There were wagons there to take us to Glenwood, Iowa our destination. The party consisted of father mother 5 children, my aunt Mrs. Robertson and a Miss Cunningham both teachers. Father came west to take care of a school started by the Methodist Church of Glenwood. The school was a financial failure and closed April 1st 1867. We crossed river at Plattsmouth to Nebraska about middle of April of that year, and settled in the then thriving village of Rock Bluff now extinct. Rock Bluff was about 7 miles down river from Plattsmouth. Was quite a shipping 4 point for grain and hogs on the river. Nebraska had been admitted as a state, Mch. 1st of that year. Railroad had not reached the Missouri River north of St. Joe. Missouri hence our trip by Boat from St. Joe. The Union Pacific began building out of Omaha the spring of 1867 and had to haul their first engine and a few [cars?] by ox teams from Atlantic Iowa to Council Bluffs some 40 miles. The railroad contracted with the government for so many miles of road and a train of cars by early summer to hold the right to the government land grant so ties, rails, and train had to be on time. The engine and cars were dismantled and reassembled at Omaha.

The territorial capitol was Omaha and was moved to Lincoln the summer of 1867. Lincoln was a small hamlet named Lancaster on the site chosen by the capital commission. I visited Lincoln with my father and W.F. Chapin in Aug. 18., 1867 just a few rude house in Lincoln at that time. W. Chapin moved to Lincoln shortly afterwards and was land commissioner for the Federal Land office at Lincoln and afterwards was elected first mayor of Lincoln.

We lived in Rock Bluff until the spring of 1869 when we moved to Saline County to homestead. Our home was 3/4 of a mile north of Swan City at that time county seat of that county. For our first house there was neither a house nor a tree to be seen.

The earlier settlers had all located on the streams to be near and acquire what timber there was.

There were no trees on the high lands nor even on the bottom lands at any distance from the streams.

5

Prairie fires swept the country, prevented the growth of trees on the great prairie, extending for hundreds of miles. We had everything burned on our place, excepting our dugout, stable and house in spring of 1870.

A neighbor set fire on a tract of land he wished to break up and the high wind swept the fire down along his buildings and burned all of them except the house. He lost a horse, some 300 bushels of wheat, all of his corn and was burned himself so badly his life was despaired of for a time. Not able to work for months. Carried scars to his grave. Fires swept over our own homestead and burned our hay and field.

In 1873-74, grasshoppers cleaned us out. 1873 they came in millions and destroyed all of the corn. We had 50 acres of corn just tasseling out. We left home to attend church about 10:30 a.m. and when we returned home about 1 p.m. there was nothing left but stubs about a foot high. They cleaned up everything but the small grain, prairie grass and sorghum that a few people had planted to make syrup. They would not touch the corn and grain that had been harvested and stacked. Red pepper and tobacco was their delight. An old Yankee neighbor had a tobacco patch that they cleaned out. The old gent was peeved about his tobacco and said that they added insult to injury by sitting on the poles of his corral and spitting tobacco juice in his face. After they had cleaned out the country they migrated but left millions of eggs that hatched out the next spring in time to destroy the wheat and oats but left after the small grain was gone. Then came another disaster, 6 drouth and hot winds came and burned up the corn. That left the homesteads in bad shape. No food no money. Of course most of the pioneers were poor and came west to make their homes for themselves. Many were discouraged for ample reason. Most of them stuck it out, some too gritty to leave and some too poor. In the fall of 1874, I was 18 years of age, went with an old hunter by the name of Abe Cox out of the Solomon river country

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in western Kansas to lay in the supply of buffalo meat. On that trip I killed my first and only buffalo. Mr. Cox got several. We jerked and dried the wagon load of meat that carried us through the winter and had enough to help some of the neighbors, too. The dry hot winds of the plains cured that meat so hard that the peices were nearly hard as a piece of stove wood and would keep indefinitely and was good "belly timber" as Abe Cox would term it. After we left the settlement some 40 miles west of home we did not see a human being until we got back some 4 weeks later. Plenty of Cheyenne Indians in western Kansas in those times, but we met none of them on our trip which no doubt was fortunate for us. Uncle Abe Cox was a bad man for Indians to fool with, but I was not anxious to meet any the gentry. We lived, as I mention before 3/4 of a mile north of Swan City at that time, county seat of Saline County. Saline County was in the west tier of organized counties and the law such as it was taken care of by U.S. marshals out in the unorganized country. In May, 1871 Wild Bill Hickock was Deputy U.S. Marshall and brought 3 prisoners to Swan City for trial. There was no court house, no jail and as the next term of court did not convene 7 until the following October. Bill Hickok had to herd those prisoners around there until Court opened. The sheriff lived 2 miles west of town, had no place to keep them, so it was up to Bill Hickock to "ride herd" on them which was an old cowboy expression. I got quite well acquainted with Wild Bill during the time he was there and found him a very quiet unassuming man but I should of hated to arouse the tiger in him without doubt. Those fellows he was "herding" were of the same mind as they were very lamb-like. He even borrowed shot-guns and took them (those prisoners) prairie chicken hunting. When they got to the hunting grounds he gave each a gun and started them out in front of him he following so 30 to 50 feet behind them with those six-guns right under his hands. Those fellows shot just chickens and no breaks toward Bill. They knew better. I was along once, driving the wagon for them and they got plenty of game. I have seen Bill at target practice many times. I have thrown up bottles and empty cans for him to shoot at. He would not draw a gun until the target left my hand, then, in a flash he drew and fired seldom missing often shooting with both guns.

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Wild Bill afterwards went down to Kansas at Abilene. He was marshall of the town down there on the great cattle trails from Texas to the north. The law was so lax that the gamblers and wild cowboys made a living almost impossible there for law-abiding citizens. Wild Bill was employed to come and tame the town and he did a good job of it. From there he drifted to Deadwood, South Dakota where he was shot and killed by McCall. This was due because it was the first time that 8 Hickok ever was known to turn his back to the door. He was playing cards. McCall shot him in the back.

I met Buffalo Bill in 1881, at North Platte, Nebraska. He lived on a ranch four miles west of town. Saw him often. I never was attracted to Buffalo Bill as I was to Wild Bill.

Wild Bill was kind of a fellow that young children would follow around. Never heard Wild Bill swear around children and very seldom swear. He was a quiet fellow.

I saw the "Plainsmen," movie and Gary Cooper played a good part. One thing that was wrong, though, was the way that they shot their pistols in the movie. In the movie, they made a "cross draw," but in reality Wild Bill Hickok drew his gun straight up. Right hand gun from right side.

Big Bill Staley was one of the early frontier characters of Saline County. Big Bill opened a saloon at Swan City. My father, being a Methodist preacher and Bill being quite friendly with him, invited my father to preach a sermon in the saloon before he opened up. My father accepted the invitation and used the bar as a pulpit. Just at the beginning of the services, some hoodlums thought they would break up the meeting. Bill walked behind the bar and got his six-shooters, walked to the door and told the fellows to "stop that racket" and come into the meeting and if they continued the racket there would be a funeral instead of a meeting. The hoodlums left and the meeting went on undisturbed.

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In traveling the highways laid by the government surveyors in long days ago, we find much jogging and angling in some of the woods due to the fact that a lot of surveyors were drunk when they were surveying. A good example of it is the roads around Beatrice, this is what the old settlers say, anyhow.